



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

for the waste of our lumbering resources was fire. In the words of a recent writer this was "the dread scourge of the lumber industry." The sawmills and sawmill towns, flimsily constructed of inflammable pine, were periodically swept by the flames. Although the mills and mill towns were commonly rebuilt with characteristic American vigor, the forest fires were the source of appalling loss to the state. Yet the public mind was for many years indifferent to these losses, and the fires were commonly left to burn themselves out, with no human effort to impede or check the course of the flames. In 1864 one of the greatest conflagrations which had ever visited the state swept for weeks through the northern pinery regions, yet so indifferent were the people of southern Wisconsin to the matter that it received scarcely any notice in the newspapers of this section.

Our numerous forest fires, then, have possessed not only thrilling human interest but vast economic significance. Mr. Bracklin's narrative describes a single personal experience with one small forest fire. What he experienced and here describes, however, applies with suitable variation of details to hundreds of similar events in Wisconsin. In this fact consists its broader significance.

CONSOLATION FOR THE PRESENT CRISIS

It seems evident, from the sources of information at our command, that the Imperial German Government counted largely on its ability to neutralize the national will of America by fostering among Americans of German descent a spirit of disloyalty to their country. That the citizens of the Badger State in particular could thus be cajoled into playing a traitor's rôle was not only believed in Germany, but widely feared in our own country as well. That our citizens of German descent should be enthusiastic about going into the war was not reasonably to have been expected; that, faced with a hard duty, they should prefer to play the rôle of

traitor is quite another matter. We do not believe, and from the beginning have not feared, that any considerable number will make such a choice.

In such a time of trial and stress as the present we are fairly entitled to gain what comfort we may from an examination of our past. The simple truth is that, with the possible exception of the Spanish War, we enter upon the present struggle with more of unanimity and resolution than has been the case with any other great war in our history. Of our unfortunate divisions and discords during the Revolution and the War of 1812 every schoolboy is informed. The North had little enthusiasm for the Mexican War and largely abstained from participation in it. The Civil War was a fratricidal contest, but the South eliminated from consideration, the people of the North were sadly divided in counsels and desires. That this was true of Wisconsin has been largely forgotten by our citizens. The present generation has forgotten, if indeed it was ever aware of, the fact that Wisconsin was the seat of a formidable copperhead sentiment during the war; that there was widespread opposition to the enforcement of the draft by the federal government; and that a largely attended mass meeting at the state capital in April, 1861, after the firing on Fort Sumter, laid on the table a resolution pledging support to President Lincoln. It is true the local paper declared, in the latter instance, that a majority of those present favored the resolution but were circumvented in their desire by the chairman of the meeting; but even so it is evident that there must have been a large element of opposition to have enabled him to carry through the maneuver. Notwithstanding the deliberation with which the recent legislature went about expressing its support of the national government, it requires no hardihood to affirm that no chairman of a public gathering, however traitorous his desire, could have prevented a Madison audience of 1917 from expressing its intention of standing behind the national government.

To touch for a moment upon another matter, the political ideals of the period preceding the Civil War were shockingly low in comparison with those of the present time. If there has been any graft in connection with the construction of our new \$7,000,000 capitol, the public is as yet totally unconscious of the fact. Three-quarters of a century ago, on the contrary, we could not build even a forty-thousand-dollar capitol without a riot of mismanagement and dishonesty. The period of "Barstow and the balance," and of the "forty thieves" signifies more than the addition of a picturesque phrase to our political annals. Instead of constituting a rare exception, the political morality which these phrases suggest was painfully commonplace in Wisconsin prior to the Civil War. It was only a few years before we entered upon that great struggle that a powerful corporation brazenly established a pay-counter at the capital and bought with paltry silver the entire state legislature, and even the governor himself. Idealists are by no means satisfied with the political standards and practices of our public men of the present day, but they are lily-white in comparison with the similar standards of the fifties in Wisconsin.

Or again, let us glance by way of comparison at the financial situation. The diary of Harvey Reid, published elsewhere in this magazine, affords an inkling, at least, of our deplorable financial condition in 1861. The national banking-system still lay in the womb of the future, while the treacherous "wild cats" flourished at the expense alike of private fortunes and public credit. With the first breath of war these institutions toppled in headlong ruin, notwithstanding that the state legislature, heedless of constitutional prohibitions, essayed vainly to prevent the crash. Within four days after the news of the firing on Fort Sumter, specie payments were suspended in Wisconsin; and the efforts of the government to float a war loan of \$1,200,000 on the credit

of the state of Wisconsin in the summer of 1861 met with dismal and inglorious failure.

We do not remind the present generation of these things in any pharisaical attitude, but for the encouragement they afford to us at this time. The outstanding fact is that in the very face of such conditions as we have adverted to, Wisconsin girded herself for the task and played a noble part in the Civil War. We enter the present struggle immeasurably better prepared from almost every viewpoint than we did the one of old. If, as we believe, our people still retain a fair measure of pluck and ability, the record we are about to make should be correspondingly better than that of fifty years ago.